

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

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Christmas shopping, bringing the largest spending period of the year, is usually a "field day" for passers of counterfeit notes.

Consequently Chief Frank J. Wilson, of the United States Secret Service, today issued a general warning to the public, particularly merchants, to be on guard against acceptance of counterfeit bills, which by careful scrutiny even by the inexpert, may be detected.

Chief Wilson called attention to the fact that the holiday buying season with its unusual activity of business, crowded stores and tired clerks, offers the counterfeiters and fake note passers a golden opportunity to trade worthless greenbacks for merchandise or genuine bills.

In connection with the nation-wide drive against counterfeiters Chief Wilson sent a circular letter to all supervising agents and agents-in-charge throughout the country to solicit cooperation of newspapers and commercial bodies in an effort to advise merchants and other business men of the increased danger of losses from the acceptance of counterfeits during the Christmas spending season.

In years past the Christmas season has been marked by thousands of dollars in losses to business men, merchants, restaurants, hotels and others through their acceptance of spurious notes on small purchases and giving change in legal money.

Particular emphasis is placed by Chief Wilson on the widespread distribution of a fake five-dollar silver certificate which is described as the most dangerous and deceptive note of the denomination in existence today. These

bills have been passed in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Norfolk, Cleveland, Toledo, Richmond and Nashville.

However, close observation of this bill reveals a number of defects easily detectable. In the blue seal (the Seal of the Treasury) the abbreviation "Septent." is spelled "Septens." The letter "E" preceding the serial number in the lower left hand corner and on the right over the seal is slightly larger than the digits of the number, whereas on the genuine note the letter and digits are the same size. The points of the blue seal are blurred and uneven on the counterfeit.

Since the general public for the most part is unfamiliar with details of the character and quality of currency and coins, the counterfeiter makes capital of this lack of knowledge. Few people know that the United States notes are printed from steel engraved plates originally engraved by hand by the finest engravers in the world.

Genuine notes are printed on high-grade distinctive paper impregnated with tiny red and blue silk fibre. Difficult to discern at first glance, these threads are intended to increase the paper's tensile strength and durability and not as a protective feature, as some people imagine.

Counterfeiters, the most deliberate probably of all criminals, rarely stay long in one place. These "quick change artists" take advantage of rush hours of business, particularly in the busy retail stores, making small purchases in order to get the maximum return.

"Watch the rush hours," Chief Wilson warned.

"Frayed nerves of store clerks and the desire of shoppers to make purchases near the closing hours of business often result in negligence in examination of paper money. Clerks frequently take in money without examination and unwittingly may pass it on as change to customers."

Chief Wilson advises all storekeepers particularly to watch for strangers who are making small purchases with \$5, \$10, and \$20 bills. The objective of the counterfeiter is to get as much change as possible for his worthless bill. The Secret Service cautions the clerk to give the bills presented by such customers an extra "once over."

"Do not return the counterfeit bill to the passers", Chief Wilson warned. "By diplomatic means delay the passer if possible, indicating it will be a few minutes before the change can be secured. In the meantime call the police. Obtain the best possible description of the individual, for his suspicions may be aroused and he will escape."

To those who assist the Treasury Department in capturing criminals of this type rewards will be paid.

There are three types of genuine Treasury bills --- the United States note, which bears a red seal and red serial number; the Silver Certificate, with a blue seal and serial number, and the Federal Reserve note, with a green seal and serial number.

For purposes of identifying the counterfeit bill it should be remembered that the paper on which it is printed is nearly always less substantial than that used for genuine currency. Crush the suspected bill in your hand, Chief Wilson advises, and the chances are if it is a counterfeit note it will not be so springy or as "crackly" as the genuine.

The portrait on a real bill stands out sharply. On the counterfeit bill the face and the background are likely to be dead and flat. The intricate little cross-hatching of lines is smudged. Comparison of a suspected counterfeit with a legal note is the most accurate method of determination.

The United States Secret Service district office in Washington is in Room 92, Treasury Department, telephone number National 6400, branches 334 and 335. Agents stationed there will be glad to answer calls at any time should a questionable bill be received.